PRODUCTION NOTES

CREDITS

"Anthology" 2025
Producers: Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Olivia Harrison, Sean Ono Lennon
Directors: Bob Smeaton (Episodes One-Eight); Oliver Murray (Episode Nine)
Editor and Additional Direction: Matthew Longfellow
Editor: Jonny Halifax (Episode Nine)
Producers: Jonathan Clyde, Martin R. Smith
Executive Producer: Jeff Jones
Music Supervisor: Giles Martin
Production Manager: Emma Montanet
Archive Producer UK: Adrian Winter

WingNut Film Productions Ltd
Producer & CEO: Carlos Ramírez Laloli
Production Manager: Genevieve Ferrier
Post-Production Supervisor: Elliot Travers
MAL Team Supervising Sound Editor: Emile de la Rey

Park Road Post-Production
CEO: David Tingey
Head of Production: Peter Carson
Producer: Christina Hazard
Supervising Sound Editors & Re-Recording Mixers: Tim Chaproniere, Alexis Feodoroff
Senior Online Editor: Tim Willis
Colourist & Creative Supervisor: Jon Newell
Colourist: Matt Wear

"Anthology" 1995
Director: Geoff Wonfor
Executive Producer: Neil Aspinall
Producer: Chips Chipperfield
Series Director and Writer: Bob Smeaton
Editor: Andy Matthews

Production Manager: Bryony Cranstoun
Interviews: Jools Holland and Bob Smeaton

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EPISODES: 9 x 60 mins

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SYNOPSIS

"The Beatles Anthology" is the landmark documentary series exploring the life and times of the most influential and beloved band of all time, as told by The Beatles themselves. Beautifully restored by Peter Jackson's Park Road Post in Wellington, New Zealand, the illuminating series includes a new ninth episode featuring previously unreleased footage of Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr during the creation of the original 1990s "Anthology" series and music project. The series spans the band's gritty, hungry early days to the phenomenon of Beatlemania and global superstardom. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr take us along for the ride as they revisit the highs and lows and twists and turns of The Beatles' long and winding eight years as a band.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The story begins in the monochrome surroundings of wartime Liverpool and concludes in a world transformed by the revolutions of the 1960s. Along the way, the narrative moves across Hamburg, London, cities across the USA, India, and countless locations besides. But what really matters are the four people at the heart of everything, their recollections of both their own incredible experiences, and how much the world changed around them.

This is the core of The Beatles' "Anthology" series. Three decades ago, it reinvented the art of the music documentary and set a new standard of storytelling. Instead of an orthodox treatment centred on an outside narrator and talking heads, "Anthology" featured the four Beatles candidly telling their own story. It introduced them to new generations of viewers and listeners, and began a hugely successful phase of their creative and commercial afterlife that is still ongoing. Put simply, the way we now understand The Beatles and what made them so special all started here.

"Anthology's" history began in the early 1970s. In the immediate aftermath of The Beatles' break-up, their close friend and associate Neil Aspinall set about amassing as much historic footage as he could find and eventually finished a feature-length rough-cut provisionally titled "The Long And Winding Road." It lacked any new contributions from its four principal subjects, but even at a time when everything it portrayed was still recent and raw, it proved one thing beyond doubt: that here was a story which would sooner or later have to be told in full.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the project remained in a state of suspension, until everything finally started to align, a decade or so after John Lennon's murder. "When we got over our business troubles, we decided that we might do the definitive story of The Beatles," said Paul McCartney. Everyone

involved knew what would set it apart: “Seeing as other people had had a go at it, we thought it might be good from the inside-out, rather than the outside-in.”

For Ringo Starr, this essential idea had huge appeal: “You’ve heard it from everybody else. Now you can hear it from us.”

And so it started. Circa 1991, Paul, Ringo and George Harrison began to share each other’s company and talk about the work ahead. Eventually, while a trove of John Lennon’s archive interview material was put together, the three of them sat—in various locations—for long interviews with the British musician and broadcaster Jools Holland. There were also contributions from three key insiders: Neil, George Martin and their ally and former advisor Derek Taylor. The UK filmmakers Geoff Wonfor and Bob Smeaton began building on what Neil had begun, meticulously weaving together archive footage.

If the early Beatles had sometimes seemed in danger of becoming distant and fuzzily defined, all their vitality and excitement suddenly came roaring back. The garish colours and exotic flavours of their later incarnations were more vivid than ever. Better still, the eight-part “Anthology” format created space to explore both their music and all the stories that swirled around it.

And the time felt right. “I’m glad it didn’t get made till now,” said George. “I think it’s been nice for us—and the public—just to forget about The Beatles for a while and let the dust settle, and now we’ve gone back to it with a fresh point of view.”

The passing years had provided a lot of clarity and context. But the fact that Anthology materialised in the mid-1990s also represented a brilliant feat of accidental timing. As George said, for a time, certainly in their home country, The Beatles and their history and legacy had receded from the cultural foreground to the point that it had all almost seemed unfashionable. But now, a new generation of musicians and fans were tuning in again.

Their psychedelic period had been an inspiration to the dance music upsurge that began with the so-called Second Summers of Love in 1988 and 1989. Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain made no secret of his debt to The Beatles, which was there to hear in his band’s hugely successful songs. In the UK, the musicians at the heart of what became known as Britpop—who had mostly been born just as The Beatles’ career ended—were all fans. Everything was positioned perfectly for The Beatles to reintroduce themselves to a public who had a new appetite for such a huge and ambitious telling of their story.

Across the world, there was huge excitement when the series premiered on network television. The anticipation was boosted by the release of a new track: “Free As A Bird,” founded on a John Lennon demo from the mid-1970s, which had been developed and completed by Paul, George and Ringo, with a video that surreally evoked The Beatles’ story to very moving effect. It was followed by the first of three “Anthology” albums, full of rare and unheard music that presented a kind of shadow story to the one told in the documentaries.

The Beatles had gone their separate ways a quarter-century before, but here they were again, miraculously located in both the past and the present, and as full of life and fascination as ever. And that is how things have remained ever since.

Restoring “Anthology”

The new incarnation of The Beatles’ “Anthology” proves that both their music and the story of their time together are full of an incredible sense of excitement and vitality. Most of that, of course, is down to their unique talents and qualities. But across all the episodes of this newly restored and recut series—including the new ninth episode—the sheer magic of what viewers see, hear and feel is also the result of painstaking work behind the scenes. The result is a viewing experience that reflects one of The Beatles’ defining qualities: sheer timelessness.

As “Anthology” first came to life in the early-to-mid 1990s, the original interviews with Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—along with a handful of their closest associates—were shot on 16mm film. Three decades on, this meant they could be digitized and rendered newly pristine and sparkling with relative ease. The new “Anthology’s” defining challenge, by contrast, was the restoration of a wealth of archive footage that captured the four of them at every stage of their career and was originally gathered from around the world.

Even the shortest original sequences were shot on film and then stored in old-fashioned cans. But initially, producers at The Beatles’ Apple organisation feared that the original masters for all this material would have long since been transferred to videotape and then lost or thrown away, which would have presented massive technical challenges. As the “Anthology” 2025 co-producer Martin R. Smith recalls, this assumption proved to be wonderfully wrong. “In almost every instance, from every archive provider, the original film had been kept,” he says. “So, we had an embarrassment of riches.”

Working with the original material, the aim was “to retain the flavour of the 1960s, but with a quality fit for the twenty-first century,” and bring new life to often iconic scenes—from the performance at the Cavern in Liverpool filmed in late 1962, through the Maysles’ brothers footage of The Beatles’ first trip to the US in 1964, and on to such delights as 1967’s Magical Mystery Tour and the promotional films for “Hey Jude” and “Revolution” filmed the following year. Over long months, the necessary restoration was done by a team of specialists from Peter Jackson’s Park Road Productions, the centre of excellence that had done such spellbinding work on his three “Get Back” films.

This work is unbelievably forensic. Thousands of individual sequences were given to a team of restoration artists, who went through the footage frame by frame, retaining as much original detail as possible while eliminating such glitches as scratches, chemical marks, warping, and hairs in the original camera gates. Grain and noise-management techniques ensured that the filmic quality of the original material was preserved. To combine that sense of historic authenticity with the visual richness of today’s high-definition screens, the skills of Park Road’s colorist were crucial.

Giles Martin provided the wide range of music content of the nine “Anthology” episodes, working closely with audio restoration teams from Park Road Post and Jackson’s production company WingNut, which was responsible for the “Get Back” documentary series. Giles has made sure the episode soundtracks reflect the quality of the picture restoration and match the newly remixed studio masters used in the project. From an audio perspective, the technical quality of The Beatles' live tracks, in particular, has always been a challenge. The sources themselves were often sub-optimal at the time of recording. That, combined with often raucous crowd noise, makes it hard to hear the band’s on-stage performances.

The first stage of audio restoration entailed the de-mixing of the live performances led by WingNut's Emile De La Rey who de-mixed the raw audio files using MAL—which stands for machine-assisted learning and was given its name to honour the Beatles' late road manager Mal Evans. Emile heads the same team who had already worked not just on the audio aspects of "Get Back" and the restored film "Let It Be," but "Revolver," "1962-1966" and "1967-1970" (aka the Red and Blue albums), as well as "Now And Then," the Beatles' last song, released in 2022.

Their additional task was to "demix" what accompanied "Anthology's" visuals, allowing extraneous noise to be separated from music and dialogue with raw dialogue being separated from "clicks, pops, artifacts and reverb." giving new levels of precision. The dialogue, music and effects for each episode have also been restored and remixed in Dolby Atmos 5.1 and stereo for home theatre release.

Upgrading and enhancing their original live sound was all about emphasising "proximity and clarity." For the first time, the often-deafening wall of screams that accompanied The Beatles' shows could be isolated to reveal the wonders underneath—a process that one insider likens to "lifting a veil."

Giles's remixes push the band's stage sound to the fore, enhance its energy, and unearth a more detailed sonic experience for the fans from the iconic performances they love. A selection of tracks from studio master tapes were also de-mixed and remixed along the way, including "Things We Said Today," The Beatles' version of "Money (That's What I Want)," "Flying," and "All Together Now."

Mention should also be made of the restoration and enhancement of the archive John Lennon interviews that form one of "Anthology's" key elements. These often combined his voice with music and background noise, which could at last be separated out, allowing the clarity and impact of what he said to come to the fore.

Everything combines into a breathtakingly up-close telling of The Beatles' story. The new clarity of what we see finally fits the significance of all those events and incidents, and the impact of the music. So, as always, the four of them and their story transcend the past, and speak with a unique power to the present, and future.

An "Anthology" for a New Generation

And so, the ultimate version of the "Anthology" project was created with new generations of viewers and listeners in mind. Apple Corps' UK-based production team took the original eight longform episodes and cut each episode down to just short of 60 minutes, resulting in a stronger narrative. All the post-production—online, picture and sound restoration, sound mix and grade—was completed at Park Road Post in New Zealand, the company owned by Peter Jackson, who worked such magic with the three-part "Get Back" series. Giles Martin, who has been working on The Beatles' music for twenty years, has provided up-to-date audio mixes for the majority of the music featured throughout the series.

Episode One of the "Anthology" series begins in 1940s Liverpool, moves on to The Beatles' amazing formative period in Hamburg, and reaches its end when, in the midst of a freezing winter, "Please Please Me" reaches the top of the UK singles charts. We then move through the British birth of Beatlemania, and their sudden conquest of America in early 1964. Not long after, the arrival in their lives of new illicit forms of stimulation point to the artistic breakthroughs of "Rubber Soul" and "Revolver." Woven

through all this are profoundly human aspects of the story: not least, their unbelievably close four-way bond, and the hugely important role played by their manager Brian Epstein.

The creative feats of 1966 run alongside an undercurrent of fear and violence, epitomised in episodes five and six by their treatment by the dictator of the Philippines and the furor in the American Deep South over John's "bigger than Jesus" quote, when the story contains both bitter resentment, and The Beatles' very real fears for their safety. In that context, what comes soon after almost beggars belief: they begin work on the unprecedentedly creative "Sgt Pepper," after which came Epstein's shocking passing, Magical Mystery Tour, and the time they spent in India, where they wrote most of the material that would appear on the so-called "White Album."

As their company Apple rises and then falls, The Beatles begin the two-year passage towards their break-up, when the reality they have to deal with starts to darken, and they experience the establishment revenge manifested in harassment and drug busts. But to the end, through the creation of "Let It Be" and "Abbey Road," "Anthology" shows that they held on to the way of thinking (and being) that defined them, summed up in one of the last pieces of music they recorded: "And in the end/The love you take/Is equal to the love you make."

All this—and much more—is remembered with insight, humour and an occasional sense of amazement at what The Beatles created and catalysed. In an age when social media has played a key role in making public figures wary of being honest and outspoken, there is a brilliantly bracing quality to what the four of them say in archive footage, and much of what they remember as they look back. But that was always one of their key qualities. "We were always very true to ourselves," said Paul. "And I think that brutal honesty The Beatles had was important…sticking to our own guns and really saying what we thought in some way gave other people in the world the idea that they too could be truthful."

There is a new episode—Episode Nine—that serves as a coda. It centres on footage of Paul, George and Ringo meeting up again in the 1990s, sitting for joint interviews about their time together, playing music together and listening to Beatles songs in the company of George Martin. They also talk about another aspect of Anthology's inherent authenticity: the fact that it presents its story complete with complexity and contradictions.

"We started off trying to make the definitive story of The Beatles," said Paul. "And we ended up realising that it's almost impossible to get the definitive story, because people look at things from different points of view." He later put the same point in a different way: "That's how life really is. You live this dream that there's a definitive version, and there isn't."

"Everybody sees life as it's happening through their own eyes," said George. "And when you get a situation like The Beatles' story, everybody had their own idea of what happened." Because "Anthology" recognises that basic truth, it honours the kaleidoscopic, multi-faceted nature of The Beatles' lives: with experiences as surreal and often unexpected as these, how could there be one single take on what transpired?

The "White Album" is remembered by George as a record on which "there was a lot more individual stuff," whereas Ringo says "we ended up being more of a band again." Exactly what happened when they met Elvis Presley in the summer of 1965 is a matter of contention (although George clearly recalls asking his entourage "if anybody had any reefer"). The sessions that gave rise to "Let It Be" and the

movie of the same name—since explored in the "Get Back" films—were simultaneously scattered with tension and good humour, and different voices emphasise those different aspects.

Thanks to this approach, we get the whole story. Each episode begins with the same visual sequence: four black-and-white Beatles performing "Help!" at the foot of a band logo that becomes bigger and bigger, to the point that John, Paul, George and Ringo recede into invisibility. This symbolises what actually happened while The Beatles were together and for years afterwards: a great mountain of acclaim, myth and controversy obscuring any clear sense of what the four of them had been through. In that sense, "Anthology" restores enough raw humanity to everything to make it feel completely authentic. And its new form, that aspect of the project becomes even clearer.

What really burns through the "Anthology" series is the feeling of people living their lives at four or five times the normal speed, even for successful musicians. As against how modern musical careers tend to work, there are no four-year gaps between albums or mutually agreed hiatuses and lengthy solo projects: the amount of intrigue and excitement in each episode proves that The Beatles' sheer velocity sometimes seemed almost supernatural.

The world around them evolved quickly too, partly because of their influence. In 2025, do we really feel that far from 2019? 1969, by contrast, feels like another world relative to 1963, and the cultural changes The Beatles inaugurated were a big part of the reason why. "We were all in this ship in the '60s…a ship going to discover the New World," said John, in a quote included in "Anthology's" accompanying book, published in 2000. "And The Beatles were in the crow's nest…We were going through the changes, and all we were saying was, 'It's raining up here!' or 'There's land!' or 'There's sun!' We were just reporting on what was happening to us."

The story "Anthology" tells is also about something much more emotional: the almost unbelievable connection between these four people. "They became the closest friends I'd ever had," said Ringo. "I was an only child and suddenly I felt as though I'd got three brothers. We really looked out for each other."

At the end of episode eight, he talks about the same thing, in one of Anthology's most moving scenes. "It was magical," he says. "Some really loving, caring moments, between four people. A really amazing closeness. That four guys really loved each other was pretty sensational."

"I've read cracks about, 'Oh, The Beatles sang 'All You Need Is Love,' but it didn't work for them," says John. "But nothing'll ever break the love we have for each other."

"I'm really glad that most of the songs dealt with love, peace, understanding," says Paul. "They really did. If you look back, there's hardly any one [that] says, 'Go on kind, tell 'em all to sod off, leave your parents.' It's all very 'All You Need Is Love,' John's 'Give Peace A Chance'—a very good spirit behind it all."

We are a long way from when The Beatles finally broke up, but the new Anthology shows that their journey is still going on as their story carries on unfolding, in often unexpected ways. Because this is an era when technology ensures the musical past is as accessible as the present, one is often almost indistinguishable from another. And so, the wonder of their history endures in ways they saw coming. "The Beatles will go on and on—on those records and films and videos and books and whatever, and in people's minds," George said as "Anthology" took shape. "And The Beatles, I think, exist without us."

The reasons for that endless afterlife are what defines just about every Anthology moment, and what this series tells us, not just about The Beatles' music, but the incredible period they moved through together. Nothing like that had ever been experienced by four people in such a short space of time. It still remains utterly unique. And complete with honesty, insight and masterful storytelling, it's all here.

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EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE ONE

And so the story begins. As a kind of overture, "Anthology" opens with glimpses of The Beatles' career accompanied by "In My Life" from "Rubber Soul," with its evocative and moving mentions of "places I'll remember, all my life," and "people and things that went before." Those words point to one key place and time: Liverpool in the early 1940s, the backdrop to the births of John, Paul, George and Ringo, and everything that formed them.

"My mother used to say that because I was born, the second World War started," says Ringo, and all four Beatles take their first breaths in a city struggling though it's some of its most difficult and tragic days. A little later, they are also hit by more personal ruptures and losses. Ringo spends much of his childhood in hospital, with peritonitis; as teenagers, John and Paul lose their mothers. But all four are also blessed by a huge social change that infuses their pre-fame period with a new sense of optimism: the end of Britain's system of compulsory military service, which gives the country's young people a real sense of freedom.

And then, with perfect timing, a cultural revolution arrives. "Rock'n'roll was real," says John. "Everything else was unreal. It was the only thing to get through to me, out of all the things that were happening when I was 15." Paul recalls his first glimpse of Elvis Presley: "He just looked perfect…the messiah had arrived."

Via their shared interest in rock'n'roll and guitars, Paul befriends George, and then on July 6, 1957, he sees John playing at an outdoor event in suburban Liverpool, at which point The Beatles' story decisively begins. They talk with real love about the inspiration provided by Elvis, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard, and in particular, Buddy Holly, who wrote his own songs, including "That'll Be The Day," one of the first two songs they record.

After they take their first collective musical steps in Liverpool, their big watershed happens in Hamburg, "right in the middle of the naughtiest city in the world" as George puts it. They now have a full-time drummer, Pete Best. Because they have to pay for eight or ten hours a night, their talent undergoes a huge transformation. It's here that they also encounter Ringo—playing with his first band, Rory Storm and The Hurricanes. When he sits in with The Beatles, it feels as if everything is suddenly in place.

Back in Liverpool, their lifelong aide and confidante, Neil Aspinall, becomes their road manager and Brian Epstein takes charge. He persuades them to give up their beloved black leather and start wearing suits and sets about finally getting them a deal with a record company. "If he hadn't gone around London on foot with tapes under his arm…we would never have made it," says John.

They sign to Parlophone and begin working with producer George Martin. Pete Best is replaced by Ringo, which triggers the mini riot in which George gets a black eye. In February 1963, “Please Please Me” makes it to number one in the UK singles chart, and everything really commences.

EPISODE TWO

In this phase of The Beatles’ progress, there’s a sense of the four of them rapidly making their way up a staircase, going from theatres and ballrooms around their native country to massed adulation across the world. And as that story takes shape, there are regular stories that highlight their amazing closeness.

In the midst of a biting English winter, for example, the windshield falls out of their touring van, and they have to take drastic steps to protect themselves from sub-zero temperatures, by simply lying on top of each other. “When the one on the top just got so cold that it was like hypothermia was setting in,” says Ringo, “it was his turn to get on the bottom. We’d warm each other up that way.”

Their tight internal bond was also highlighted by their confidence as musicians. “We were performers in Liverpool, Hamburg and other dance halls, you know,” says John, “and what we generated was fantastic. And there was nobody to touch us in Britain.” As if to prove it, “From Me To You” brings them their second British number one in April 1963. And their third, “She Loves You,” coincides with a new development: massed teenage screams, and the birth of what we now know as Beatlemania.

Among all the hysteria, it starts to become clear that the four of them are going to combine their success with a new kind of authenticity. “We were the first working-class singers that stayed working class,” says John. “[We] didn’t try and change our accents, which in England were looked down upon.”

Their first album, “Please Please Me,” is followed by “With The Beatles,” on which John and Paul’s talent as songwriters comes to the fore, and George contributes his first self-written track. By now, they have mastered bringing the madly infectious energy of their stage shows to television, as evidenced by brilliant footage from Sweden of their show-stopper, “Long Tall Sally.”

In January 1964, they play in Paris—where, at their first show, they’re somewhat bamboozled to be confronted by a crowd mostly made up of boys, and a more hesitant atmosphere than usual. They soon bring their audiences round, but everything is then turned on its head by the small-hours telegram telling them that “I Want To Hold Your Hand” is number one in America. The news reaches them in the small hours of the morning; no-one gets any sleep that night. And at this point, everything changes once again.

On February 7, they fly into the US, full of amazement and excitement. Beatlemania has crossed the Atlantic, and in the States, it feels even more frantic. To close, there’s a quotation from Brian Epstein. “It was a turning point in rock’n’roll: a specific date on which the breadth and scope of their future was to be altered,” he says. “And it was the day their Pan-Am jet touched down at John F. Kennedy International in New York, to a welcome that has seldom been seen in history.”

EPISODE THREE

This instalment is defined by what happened next: a first trip to America that still brims with fascination and iconic imagery. It all begins in New York, where they play at Carnegie Hall and deliver their era-changing performance on the “Ed Sullivan Show,” which draws a record-breaking 73 million viewers.

Meanwhile, as recorded in brilliantly intimate footage, The Beatles find that their music is blaring from every radio, and the four of them delight in phoning the city's stations—not least WINS, the home of the self-styled "fifth Beatle" Murray the K—and requesting the soul and R'n'B music that they love. One sequence in this episode, for example, is soundtracked by the Marvin Gaye classic, "Pride and Joy."

As they move on to rapturous receptions in New York, Washington DC and Miami, the first place they have seen palm trees, where they make their second Ed Sullivan appearance—they're thrilled and surprised by what's happening to them, but also full of the underlying self-belief hardened up in Liverpool and Hamburg, evident in a perfect performance of "This Boy," broadcast to yet another huge audience. "We were just very confident," says Paul. "Confidence was at an all-time high."

"I felt we conquered America," says Ringo. "It was a sort of attitude we had: 'OK, we've conquered Sweden, France, yes.' America was ours now."

Everything goes up another level with the making of their first movie, "A Hard Day's Night," directed by Richard Lester and scripted by the British playwright Alun Owen, but really a showcase for qualities that The Beatles already had in abundance. There is talk of them inheriting the mantle of the Marx Brothers, and praise for a deftly comical solo sequence filmed with Ringo when he was in the midst of a grinding hangover. "The Beatles were funny," offers George. "They actually *were* funny." The movie is the opposite of what many expect: not a cheap and flimsy cash-in, but a clever and witty fictional picture of The Beatles' lives.

Ringo returns to hospital to have his tonsils removed—and, much to his chagrin, the band briefly tour with his temporary replacement, Jimmy Nicol, who plays with them in Holland, Hong Kong and Australia—more territories to add to the list. 300,000 people turn out to catch a glimpse of them in the centre of the city of Adelaide. The intensity of their lives is crisply summed up by a new member of their inner circle: Derek Taylor, who takes a job as Brian Epstein's persona; assistant and eventually becomes their press officer. "It was all very exciting and wonderful," he says. "But I think only a madman would have volunteered to join such a thing."

EPISODE FOUR

Their second US tour takes Beatlemania somewhere downright surreal, and you can hear the intensity of their experiences in much of the music. "It was like being in the eye of a hurricane," says John, mid-way through a sequence based around their frantic version of Chuck Berry's "Rock and Roll Music." "You thought, 'What's going on?' but that was about as deep as it got…You'd suddenly wake up in the middle of a concert or a happening and think, 'How did I get here?'"

"Even when we got away from the screaming fans," says George, "there were all the screaming policemen." From George Martin, we hear another crisp illustration of their day-to-day reality: "The only peace they got was when they were in their hotel rooms, hearing the screams outside."

Despite all the hysteria, their music is developing fast, and constantly taking on new colours and textures, thanks in part to their range of influences. A big source of inspiration is Bob Dylan, who first shares their company in a New York hotel room in September 1964, which is soon filled with fragrant smoke. Paul is convinced he's found the meaning of life and asks The Beatles' roadie Mal Evans to get a pen and pencil to make sure no-one forgets. The following morning, there it is: "There are seven levels."

A little later, while staying in Los Angeles, they have a mind-boggling meeting with Elvis, suddenly no longer the icon they marvelled at in Liverpool, but a moving, talking human being. But what really defines this chapter of their career is what happens back in London, in the recording studio: a restless quest for new sounds and mind-expanding departures that begins to kick in with "I Feel Fine" as far as anyone knows, the first track to feature deliberately-recorded feedback—and the "Beatles For Sale" album, released in late 1964.

The following year, they reach new creative heights. John and Paul write "Ticket To Ride," a "heavy record" built on a sound no rock group has yet gotten near. Though no one realises it at the time, "Help!" finds John offering a bracing picture of his emotional state that looks ahead to a new kind of songwriting. Meanwhile, Paul comes up with a composition that confirms that his own creativity has entered a new phase.

"I just woke up one morning with this song in my head," he says "and I thought, 'I don't know this song—do I?' I hawked it around all my friends: 'What's this? It's got to be something…' I didn't write it 'cos I just dreamed it. You don't get that lucky." It turns out you do: this is "Yesterday."

George's songwriting is also starting to blossom. Amid constant laughter and multiple re-takes, they complete work on their second movie. The British government announces that they are to be made Members of the British Empire, which entails an encounter with the Queen, and sparks anger among the UK's stuffy establishment. By now, it's clear that The Beatles have arrived somewhere musicians have never been before—something confirmed by news that they are about to play a massive venue in the USA, and once again rewrite popular music's rules.

EPISODE FIVE

On August 15, 1965, The Beatles play Shea Stadium in New York, in front of an estimated crowd of 56,000. It's the first stadium concert played by any band, and a mind-boggling experience for all four of them. But amid the footage of the huge crowd and The Beatles' hyperactive performance, Ringo expresses a downside that was becoming more and more apparent: "The realisation was really kicking in that nobody was really listening."

By now, the studio is a sanctuary, and the setting for more musical breakthroughs. "The work they were giving me was much more interesting," says George Martin. "They were finding new frontiers all the time. And their success gave them confidence to do things that they wouldn't dare do before."

Two albums embody this part of the story and, in The Beatles' memories, combine into one boundary-pushing whole. "'Rubber Soul' really was a matter of [us] all having experienced the recording studio," says John, "and having grown musically as well, but mainly having experienced the studio and knowing the possibilities." As Ringo sees it, both that record and "Revolver"—released less than a year later—were the product of the same attitudes and approaches: "It was getting more experimental: the songs were getting better, more interesting, so that's where we were going."

For George, there was one big new development: his immersion in Indian music, first heard on "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)." "I went out and bought a record," he says, "and that was it. It felt very familiar to me, to listen to that music. And it was around that time that I bought a sitar… When we were working on 'Norwegian Wood,' it just needed something. I picked up the sitar and found the notes—and I just kind of played it."

Songs that represent big steps forward are all over both albums: “Girl,” “Nowhere Man,” “If I Needed Someone,” “I’m Looking Through You,” “Eleanor Rigby,” “And Your Bird Can Sing,” “Got To Get You Into My Life,” “Taxman” and “Tomorrow Never Knows,” written by John and then developed by all four Beatles into a completely unprecedented piece of music. Most of their listeners don’t know it yet, but that track highlights the influence of a new source of mind-expansion: lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD.

Amazingly, no sooner is “Revolver” completed than they are back on tour. As they are reminded when they arrive in Japan—where the usual screams are replaced by a strange silence—their new songs’ complexity and ambition is increasingly impossible to replicate onstage. And the old frantic excitement is giving way to a much darker, threatening mood, which rises to the surface when they arrive in the Philippines.

Imelda Marcos, the wife of the country’s ruling dictator, invites them to an official function, which they decline to attend. And at that point, all their usual protection is withdrawn, and they find themselves harassed and threatened. Increasingly, one thought is becoming unavoidable: if this is the price to be paid for the touring life, is it worth it?

EPISODE SIX

Barely three years since their last show in a Hamburg club, The Beatles have achieved a level of fame, success and influence never seen before or since.

1966, meanwhile, is turning out to be a year full of worry and trouble. At his home in England, John is asked by the journalist Maureen Cleave about religion. His response, “we’re more popular than Jesus now…I don’t know which will go first: rock ’n’ roll or Christianity,” barely registers in his home country, but on the eve of yet another American tour, the USA sees a huge burst of noise, protest and hints of violent retribution, not least in the South’s Bible Belt.

Even before this latest controversy, there has been a rising sense of anxiety around their live shows. “Some people would let off firecrackers in the hall, and you’d think some of the others had got shot,” says George. Even in 1965, he continues, his instinct was to call time on touring, and Ringo and John seemed to increasingly feel the same way. Paul thought differently, but even his mind has now been changed. “I’d been trying to say, ‘Ah no, touring’s good and it keeps us sharp… musicians need to play,’” he says. “But finally, I agreed with them.”

Their last show in front of paying audience happens at Candlestick Park in San Francisco on August 29, 1966. For all four, there is now a break from Beatledom. John films his role as Private Gripweed in the Richard Lester movie, “How I Won The War.” Paul works with George Martin on the award-winning score for the British film “The Family Way.” George spends around six weeks in India, furthering his affinity with its deep spirituality. Ringo finally gets to spend time with his new family.

When they regroup at the end of the year, everything feels different. There are moustaches on their upper lips, their hair has changed, and the music is in the midst of another transformation. Paul’s “Penny Lane” and John’s “Strawberry Fields Forever”—whose accompanying short films are here in full—look back at their Liverpool childhoods through a surreal lens, and herald an even more dazzling level of creativity, captured in a new idea dreamt up by Paul: The Beatles taking on a fictional identity,

presenting their next album the form of a show, and then, instead of touring, sending it round the world.

The innovations and experiments of "Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" mean long hours in the studio. But the work reaps rewards, not least on what will turn out to be the album's closing track: the John/Paul co-write "A Day In The Life," whose genesis is traced by George Martin. He plays the first-run through from the original tape, and marvels at John's performance: "Even on this early take, he has a voice that sends shivers up your spine."

"Sgt Pepper" marks a global moment; Paul knows its significance when he watches Jimi Hendrix begin a London show with its title track, only three days after its release. Then Brian Epstein visits the studio with news that amounts to an ultimatum, centred on the first global satellite broadcast, which will be watched by 200 million people.

"We are to represent Britain in this round-the-world hook-up, and you've got to write a song," he says. John comes up with "All You Need Is Love," and The Beatles play to the planet, in the company of a crowd of their contemporaries. Compared to the cold and hostile mood of the previous year, everything seems to have aligned beautifully. "It was a fabulous time, musically and spiritually," says Ringo.

EPISODE SEVEN

The Beatles' next big step follows on from George's immersion in Indian music and philosophy, and leads them to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the pioneer of Transcendental Meditation, which offers a new gateway of understanding. "We'd been into drugs," says Paul, "and the next step is… you've got to try and find a *meaning.*"

They first meet Maharishi in London and then begin their introduction to his teaching in Bangor, North Wales, in a collection of would-be students that also includes Mick Jagger. George recalls a telephone suddenly ringing—and, in his recollection, being answered by John. The call relays something unthinkable: at only 32, Brian Epstein has died.

In footage from the time, with TV lights harshly shining into their faces, they have to answer questions from the media. "We loved him and he was one of us," says John. In a later interview, he talks about the thoughts that were coursing around his mind: "I didn't really have any misconceptions about our ability to do anything other than play music," he says. "I was scared, you know. I thought, we've fucking had it now."

Brian's sudden absence leaves a glaring void. But amazingly, The Beatles determinedly begin their next project: "Magical Mystery Tour," a TV movie and collection of songs that furthers 1967's madcap spirit. "We knew we weren't doing a regular film," says Paul. "We were doing a crazy, roly-poly sixties film."

In the UK, it's premiered the day after Christmas in black and white and a largely hostile press seizes its opportunity. "They all had their chance then to say, 'They've gone too far,'" says Ringo. "'Who do they think they are? What does it mean?'" Time and technicolour has since cast everything in a much more favourable light.

Early the following year, the four of them deepen their experience of meditation by travelling to Rishikesh, India, where they receive more teaching from Maharishi in the foothills of the Himalayas, and

open a new creative chapter. Amazing footage—much of it shot by The Beatles themselves—shows them resting, taking stock, and looking ahead. “We sat in the mountains eating lousy vegetarian food and writing all those songs,” says John. “’Back In The USSR,’ ‘I Will,’ ‘Dear Prudence…’”

Their lives then speed on. As they pour these new compositions into a record simply titled “The Beatles,” aka the “White Album,” they launch Apple, their attempt at mixing business with pleasure and providing help to artists, filmmakers and other musicians. And John begins his life-changing relationship with Yoko Ono. Inevitably, her constant presence by John’s side initially perplexes the other three. “She and John had a very intense romance when they got together,” says Paul. “She was a very strong woman. A very independent woman. And John always liked strong women.”

Cracks are beginning to show in their internal bond. Feeling “unloved and out of it,” Ringo temporarily leaves. When he comes back, he revels in “being more of a band again” and “lots of group activity.” George, by contrast, recalls him, Paul, and John working in separate studios, and the way that “people were accepting it was individual.” But in creative terms, all is mostly still well. The double set they release to the world in November 1968 perfectly captures its time and is a bold step on from “Sgt Pepper,” a “fine little album,” says Paul, which is quite an understatement.

EPISODE EIGHT

“They were going through a very revolutionary period at that time,” says George Martin. “They did actually come up with a very good idea: they wanted to write an album, completely, and rehearse it, and then perform it in front of an audience.”

In January 1969, this is the project The Beatles begin at Twickenham Film Studios, in the London suburbs. Replete with wondrous music, it will lead on to the movie and album titled, “Let It Be” and half a century later, the “Get Back” documentary series. But the tensions that flared up as the “White Album” was recorded are intensifying.

“I thought, ‘OK, it’s a new year [and a] new approach,’” says George. “But it soon became apparent that it wasn’t anything new. It was just going to be painful again.” Only seven days into the new sessions, he walks out.

The four of them soon reunite in much more comfortable surroundings: the basement of Apple’s HQ, where, with the addition of the keyboard player Billy Preston, everything hugely improves. “Suddenly, when we were working on something good, the bullshit went out the window,” says Ringo, “and we just got down to what we did really well.”

There is a sense of the story returning to where it started: with four musicians, playing stripped-down rock’n’roll music. Proving that point, they revive songs they last played in Liverpool and Hamburg and, having decided not to put on the big show they had first conceived, stage a performance that will soon become as legendary as any of their other big moments: the rooftop concert that is finally brought to an end by the arrival of the police.

In the offices on the floors below, Apple’s mounting business problems are cooling the atmosphere. When John puts his affairs under the control of the notorious Allen Klein, another internal crack splits open. “John arrived [and] said, ‘Ok, that’s it. I’m going with Klein,’” Paul recalls. “George and Ringo said,

‘Oh well, we’re going with John.’ And I realised I was expected to go along with it. But I didn’t think it was a good idea.”

Paul marries Linda; John ties the knot with Yoko. “They were more important to John and Paul than John and Paul were to each other,” says George Martin, “and that went for the other boys too. They wanted the freedom of having a real life.”

There is one last spectacular burst of creativity: “Abbey Road,” which is full of some of the greatest music they ever recorded: George’s “Something” (his first Beatles single) and “Here Comes The Sun,” John’s “Come Together” and “I Want You (She’s So Heavy),” Ringo’s “Octopus’s Garden,” and Paul’s “Oh! Darling” and “You Never Give Me Your Money”—not to mention the medley that defines the album’s second half.

Ringo says this was “one of the finest pieces we put together” and, although “Let It Be” was to be released early in 1970, it stands as their climactic musical farewell. It’s now getting very near the end which only leaves a run of last words about The Beatles’ amazing journey meant, from each of them.

“It was magical,” says Ringo. “Some really loving, caring moments between four people. A really amazing closeness. Four guys who really loved each other. It was pretty sensational.”

George talks about the exchange between the Beatles and the public. “They gave their money and they gave their screams,” says George. “But The Beatles kind of gave their nervous systems. Which is a much more difficult thing to give.”

“I’m really glad that most of the songs dealt with love, peace, understanding,” says Paul. “They really did. If you look back, there’s hardly any one [that] says, ‘Go on kind, tell ’em all to sod off, leave your parents.’ It’s all very ‘All You Need Is Love,’ John’s ‘Give Peace A Chance’—a very good spirit behind it all.”

“I’ve read cracks about, ‘Oh, The Beatles sang All You Need Is Love, but it didn’t work for them,” says John. “But nothing’ll ever break the love we have for each other.”

These thoughts bring the curtain down on the original eight episodes of the “Anthology” series. But everything ends with fifteen simple words that leave little else to be said:

And in the end, the love you take
Is equal to the love you make

EPISODE NINE

The Beatles finally went their separate ways between 1969 and 1970. But two decades later, they began to add a coda to their story: “Anthology,” which first brought Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr back together in 1991. The three of them, together with their friend and aide Neil Aspinall, soon arrived at a guiding idea: as this episode’s opening titles put it, “a revolutionary endeavour to tell The Beatles’ story comprehensively on screen, and in their own words.”

Neil had begun gathering footage of their history soon after the final split, but this new project was something else again. Now, the resulting eight episodes have now been restored, subtly re-cut, and given a new sense of pace—as well as being joined by this new closing installment.

Time suddenly scrolls backwards, and The Beatles' past is all around them: here they are three decades ago, talking about their memories of an even more distant past. "When we got over our business troubles, we decided that we might do the definitive story of The Beatles," says Paul, speaking in 1994. "Seeing as other people had had a go at it, we thought it might be good from the inside-out, rather than the outside-in."

"You've heard it from everybody else," says Ringo. "Now you can hear it from us."

"I'm glad it didn't get made till now," offers George. "I think it's been nice for us, and the public, just to forget about The Beatles for a while [and] let the dust settle, and now we've gone back to it with a fresh point of view."

Intimate footage filmed in the 1990s, most of which has never been seen before, shows the three of them meeting again in a variety of locations (including Studio 2 at Abbey Road, where most of The Beatles' music was recorded), playing together and talking about their collective past. They listen to the original tapes of their songs in the company of George Martin, who was working back then on the collections of unreleased material that would be collected on the three original Anthology albums. And the three of them discuss everything from their old on-tour sleeping arrangements, through their clothes and haircuts, to their shared sense of humour, and how they kept their heads in the face of almost constant drama and hysteria.

This is a constant theme that runs through the "Anthology" series: "We were lucky that there were four of us to take that pressure," says Ringo. "The four of us held each other together. At certain times, each one of us went mad. But the other three could bring us back. I was an only child, and suddenly I had three brothers."

In this footage, though, there are only three Beatles (and viewing "Anthology" in its new form movingly reminds us that there are now only two). In their interactions and exchanges, there's a sense that any tensions from the past are long gone, but also an underlying sadness about one particular absent friend. "For Ringo, Paul and I, we've had the opportunity to have all that go down the river and under the bridge, and to get together in a new light," says George at one point. "I feel a bit sorry that John wasn't able to do that. I think he would have really enjoyed this opportunity to be with us again."

But in "Anthology's" episodes, John is suddenly everywhere. "It's four of us," says Paul. "Even though John's not here, he's *here*. He's represented. He talks. His point of view comes over."

John is also at the centre of the three new Beatles tracks Paul, George and Ringo, and producer Jeff Lynne are filmed working on: "Free As A Bird," first released in 1994, 1995's "Real Love," and "Now And Then," which Paul and Ringo finally took to completion between 2021 and 2022.

His vocal parts from these uncompleted songs are taken off cassettes, cleaned up and then combined with elements played and written by the other three. At first, this is a breathtakingly emotional experience; then as the work goes on, a kind of magic starts to happen. "Having not done it for so long,

you become an ex-Beatle," marvels Paul. "But of course, getting back in the band and working on this Anthology, you're back in the band again. There's no two ways about it."

This sense of the present seamlessly mixing with the past is also what defines The Beatles' legacy—and why, because of the timeless nature of the music, the story "Anthology" tells never seems to fade. "The Beatles will go on and on—on those records and films and videos and books and whatever, and in people's minds," George says. "And The Beatles, I think, exist without us."

He cracks a smile, and mentions one of their most trailblazing songs, recorded almost sixty years ago. "Play the game existence to the end of the beginning," he says. "Tomorrow never knows."

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